

From: Seneca, Roy [Seneca.Roy@epa.gov]
Sent: 1/28/2019 4:36:54 PM
To: Servidio, Cosmo [Servidio.Cosmo@epa.gov]; Fields, Jenifer [fields.jenifer@epa.gov]; Esher, Diana [Esher.Diana@epa.gov]
CC: Nitsch, Chad [Nitsch.Chad@epa.gov]; White, Terri-A [White.Terri-A@epa.gov]
Subject: EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Headlines - Monday, January 28, 2019

EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Headlines

Monday, January 28, 2019

*** DAILY HOT LIST ***

When will federal workers get paid? Reopening the government not as easy as flipping a light switch

USA TODAY (Jan. 25) WASHINGTON – Getting the government back to full speed following a 35-day shutdown is a bit like trying to turn around an aircraft carrier: It doesn't happen very quickly. Now that President Donald Trump and congressional leaders have reached a deal to reopen the government for three weeks, the administration has begun the task of calling back the 800,000 workers who were no longer getting paid from the partial shutdown that began Dec. 22 over a budget impasse tied to the president's demand for billions in border wall funds. Many of those workers have been deemed "essential" and been called back from furlough over the past few weeks. But some of those have opted not to show up, resulting in delays at airport security checkpoints and potentially longer waits for tax returns. The shutdown already has exacted a financial cost: \$6 billion as of Jan. 25, according to estimates by S&P Global Ratings. That's \$1.4 billion more than Trump's demand for \$5.7 billion for a wall on the Southern border. With the shutdown over – at least for now – there are plenty of logistics to carry out: employees to bring back, national parks to reopen, and tax refunds to process. Here are how the reopening could affect several groups: Federal workers: They'll get their back pay but not it's not clear how fast. The White House Friday tweeted that it would be "in the coming days." Friday was the second payday for most workers since the shutdown began. With bills to pay and creditors – potentially – breathing down their necks, workers are anxious to see money in their bank accounts. The good news is they will be treated as if they had never been forced to miss work, according to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management. They'll accrue sick time and vacations days as if they had been working all along, and their pension calculation will assume they were on the job without interruption. If they applied for unemployment and started receiving benefits, they'll have to repay what they received in full...

Federal government shutdown slows process for construction permits in Pa.

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA The partial federal government shutdown is slowing the approval process for construction permits and several other environmental-related issues, according to the state Department of Environmental Protection. So far, the impacts have not been significant, as the shutdown stretches into its 33rd day. The winter season is typically a slower time for permit applications. "DEP gets a lot of criticism for not processing permits fast enough from the business community," agency spokesman Neil Shader said. "We've done a lot of work to streamline our activities, while still protecting the environment, and now this government shutdown is undercutting the work we could have done." Kevin Sunday, director of government affairs for the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry, said he has not heard from any member companies reporting a slowdown in permitting, and he credits Gov.

Tom Wolf's administration and the DEP for previously making improvements to the process. "We continue to encourage them to take more steps to reform the regulatory and permitting process, which has been identified by state House and Senate leaders as a priority for this session," Sunday said. Day-to-day inspections have not been affected by the shutdown yet, Shader said, because DEP already has delegated authority from the federal government over many aspects of environmental enforcement, such as clean drinking water inspections and air quality. Apart from the permitting issues, Shader said the agency is still awaiting EPA guidance on managing PFAS contamination in drinking water. The chemicals — used in nonstick cookware and fire-fighting foam — have been linked to illnesses, including cancer. There is uncertainty around how exactly they affect human health and at what doses. The EPA had planned to release a proposal to regulate the chemicals late last year, but that's been delayed by the shutdown. Federal grants are also being affected by the federal government's partial shutdown. Shader said the Hazardous Waste, Leaking Underground Storage, and the Clean Diesel grants have all been suspended, and reviews are not occurring. EPA has also stopped funding existing grants. Expenses for those will be paid with state funds, when available, until the EPA releases funding. He added that IT systems for EPA and the Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation, and Enforcement (OSMRE) are either offline or experiencing problems, but that DEP staff has found temporary workarounds...

Inside Appalachia: EPA May List Minden, Government Shutdown Causes Delays

WEST VIRGINIA PUBLIC BROADCASTING Two years ago, residents of Minden, West Virginia, asked the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to do more testing and consider the town's soil and water to be a health and environmental risk in need of another cleanup. Last September, residents received the news that, after analyzing new data, the agency proposed listing Minden on the Superfund National Priorities List (NPL). A final determination was supposed to happen this spring, but the partial government shutdown has pushed that back. How is the delay affecting residents? The NPL is a list of the most toxic contaminated sites in the country. Qualifying for the NPL means the federal government will pay for another clean up. This week on Inside Appalachia, we are taking another look at a story that aired in the summer of 2018 about the history of how an entire town was contaminated with the harmful chemical polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and the government cleanup efforts to mitigate the problem. Residents were faced with the possibility that the contaminants caused cancer and made it impossible to sell their homes and leave. In the 1980s, the EPA found that Shaffer Equipment was responsible for contaminating the town's soil with PCBs. The company rebuilt electrical substations for the local coal mining industry...

Commentary: Fight in Minden isn't over (By Brandon Richardson)

CHARLESTON GAZETTE-MAIL (Jan. 25) Is the fight in Minden over? The short answer is no. The fight for health and justice in Minden will not be ending anytime soon, if ever. There is lots more work to be done. The PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) contamination is still present, people are living in harm's way, and PCBs take upwards of 495 years to decompose naturally. The Environmental Protection Agency has dumped an enormous amount of resources to answer the questions of whether the Shaffer Equipment Company site is still contaminated, has the contamination moved off the site, and are residential properties contaminated? The answers are yes, yes, and yes. This was absolutely no surprise. In fact, of the many questions residents have, these were not very important. Minden residents knew the Shaffer site was still contaminated because the cleanup was never complete. Minden residents knew that the PCBs were in places other than the site because many saw PCBs dumped in several areas throughout Minden. Some even dumped them in these various locations as a part of their job. Minden residents did not witness any cleanup efforts whatsoever at these additional sites. Minden residents knew that these chemicals have moved on to residential property because they watched erosion of massive proportions carve through the dump sites during the flood of 2001. Millions of taxpayer dollars have been spent on these investigations mainly to pull the EPA out of its own denial. When are Minden residents going to be relocated? How are we going to receive specialized PCB-related healthcare throughout our lives? When is the EPA going to admit its role in our health problems? When are our health agencies going to address the systemic underreporting of cancer in Minden? These are the most important questions on the minds of Minden residents. These are the questions that have been all but avoided in agency meetings with the people of Minden. Some of these questions, when answered, will physically have impacts on human lives... The Minden Community Action Team believes in people power. We know that Minden residents, surrounding communities, Fayette County residents, the people of this state and people across the country can bring justice for Minden. As a group, the Minden Community

Action Team believe that those who are closest to and most affected by the PCBs know what is at the core of this issue. This is why we build leadership skills among those whose yards are contaminated and share a fence-line with the pollution. We love our allies and we know they are key to building the people power needed to pressure people in power. A true ally does not come to the table with their own mission and criticism for the strategy, tactics, and goals of our community leaders. Rather, they lift up, support, and enhance the work that is being led by Minden frontline community members by asking where their skills and talents can be used. If anyone reading this is up for the challenge, please reach out to the Minden Community Action Team. We need your help.

Toxic lead in drinking water: 10 Lancaster County schools find contamination; others must test this year

LANCASTER NEWSPAPERS Lisa Getz Bender is furious after learning recently that her kindergarten daughter could have been drinking lead-contaminated water at Akron Elementary School in 2017 and she wasn't told about it by school district officials. "That's not their decision to make. Even if it had been a minute level of lead, it can be detrimental to children. We should have at least been informed," she said. "Nobody was notified of any testing or any results of any pipe issues," says Bender's equally angry husband, Brian. "It was clearly swept under the carpet." A drinking fountain in a classroom and eight classroom sinks have been shut down at the 65-year-old school because, even after attempted repairs and re-tests, water still contained unsafe levels of the toxic metal. In the kindergarten classroom where Bender's daughter attended, the sink was tested three times. The first time lead levels were more than twice the action level in which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requires treatment in public water systems. The second time, after water pipes were flushed, it was lower but still at an unsafe level. But a third, follow-up test revealed the highest level yet. However, an attached drinking fountain, called a bubbler, did not have elevated levels of lead. Lisa Bender, who said her daughter has had unexplained behavioral problems that seem to match symptoms of lead poisoning, is taking her now first-grader back to the doctor and may have her tested to check for unhealthy levels of lead in her blood and bones. Lead in the body is especially dangerous for young children. It can cause behavior problems, affect IQ and result in hearing problems and delayed puberty. In adults it can affect the heart, kidneys and nerves...

Editorial: Clarion's River Of The Year: Mother Nature And Man Team Up

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE Looks were deceiving for many years when it came to the Clarion River — a tumbling waterway from the Appalachian Mountains to the Allegheny River, just south of the quaint and historic little town of Foxburg. With its scenic vistas and refreshing swimming holes, the river that flows through Clear Creek and Cook Forest state parks was as pretty as a picture in many spots, though the 110-mile waterway actually had the dubious distinction of being Pennsylvania's most polluted. Talk about turnarounds. The Clarion River now has been designated as the state's 2019 River of the Year by the Pennsylvania Organization for Waterways and Rivers. The Clarion earned the distinction by virtue of a vote involving fishermen, boaters and other outdoorsy people who frolic in or near the river. Already honored by its designation as a "National Wild and Scenic River," the newest kudo could translate to more than just positive publicity: some money from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources for river area enhancements and maintenance. This is good news for the many local...

PENNSYLVANIA

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

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Op-Ed: Government, Public Must Address Stormwater Runoff Challenges In Pittsburgh Now, 2018 officially is the wettest year on record in Pittsburgh with 57.83 inches of rain descending on our city. The previous record was set in 2004 with 57.41 inches. For a region that typically gets close to 38 inches a year, 2018 delivered nearly 50 percent more than normal. That's a lot of rain! Not only did we experience more frequent rain events in 2018, the storms were also more intense than any we've seen. These heavy downpours led to streams overflowing, roads flooding, landslides and basements backing up with rising water and raw sewage. Much property damage occurred and a life was lost from these events, making it clear that stormwater management is a public health and safety issue. Our combined sewer system, treatment facilities and roads do not have the capacity to handle the amount and intensity of water we experienced last year. These extreme storms overflow our combined sewer system and carry raw sewage into our rivers — impacting water quality in Pittsburgh and throughout our region. Last year's record rainfall has brought more urgency to fix Pittsburgh's stormwater-related problems. The problem is serious enough that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Allegheny County, Allegheny County Sanitary Authority (ALCOSAN), the City of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA) and municipalities in our region have adopted stricter environmental regulations to reduce combined-sewer overflows, manage localized stormwater impacts and address regional stream and river water quality....

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE REVIEW

Pitt students recognized by EPA for eliminating on-campus food waste (Dec. 29) Four years ago, a group of students at the University of Pittsburgh began to notice how much surplus food was being discarded daily at a campus bakery and resolved to find a way to prevent it from being wasted. This year, Pitt's Food Recovery Heroes group was recognized by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as part of the EPA's annual Food Recovery Challenge, which asks organizations to find ways they can improve sustainable food-management practices. Members of the group recover food from multiple dining halls and cafeterias, and from the Petersen Events Center following games and concerts. Between 2016 and 2017, the university's composting efforts increased nearly 600 percent, from 19.5 tons in 2016 to more than 135 tons in 2017. That food and potential energy would otherwise have been incinerated or ended up in a landfill. "EPA is proud of the way the University of Pittsburgh students have developed an innovative program to reduce food waste," said EPA Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Cosmo Servidio. "Through EPA's Food Recovery Challenge, EPA partners with municipalities, businesses, nonprofits and other entities to reduce the amount of food in landfills and help them save money on waste disposal."

Record Rain Makes Pittsburgh Area Rivers Challenging To Use For more than a year, weather has been pounding the Pittsburgh area, causing historic rainfall and river conditions that have created additional challenges for the barge industry and sometimes by extension for road traffic. Fast river conditions, fueled by more than an inch of rain from last weekend's winter storm, played a part in Monday's incident in which a dozen barges broke loose after striking the Liberty Bridge. The runaway barges also struck the Panhandle Bridge used by the Port Authority's light-rail system and closed several other bridges temporarily until engineers inspected them to make sure there was no structural damage. Even though many people were off to observe Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the closures added an hour or more to many commutes. Blame it, in part, on the rain. A record 57.71 inches of rain fell in the Pittsburgh area in 2018, saturating the ground and resulting in the Monongahela, Allegheny and Ohio rivers going above flood stage three times. That's the first time that has happened since the 1930s, before flood controls were installed on the rivers, said Alicia Miller, a hydrologist with the National Weather Service in Moon. "The ground gets to the point that it's so saturated that anything that falls out of the sky runs straight to the rivers," Ms. Miller said...

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA

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processing permits fast enough from the business community,” agency spokesman Neil Shader said. “We’ve done a lot of work to streamline our activities, while still protecting the environment, and now this government shutdown is undercutting the work we could have done.” Kevin Sunday, director of government affairs for the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry, said he has not heard from any member companies reporting a slowdown in permitting, and he credits Gov. Tom Wolf’s administration and the DEP for previously making improvements to the process. “We continue to encourage them to take more steps to reform the regulatory and permitting process, which has been identified by state House and Senate leaders as a priority for this session,” Sunday said. Day-to-day inspections have not been affected by the shutdown yet, Shader said, because DEP already has delegated authority from the federal government over many aspects of environmental enforcement, such as clean drinking water inspections and air quality. Apart from the permitting issues, Shader said the agency is still awaiting EPA guidance on managing PFAS contamination in drinking water. The chemicals — used in nonstick cookware and fire-fighting foam — have been linked to illnesses, including cancer. There is uncertainty around how exactly they affect human health and at what doses. The EPA had planned to release a proposal to regulate the chemicals late last year, but that’s been delayed by the shutdown. Federal grants are also being affected by the federal government’s partial shutdown. Shader said the Hazardous Waste, Leaking Underground Storage, and the Clean Diesel grants have all been suspended, and reviews are not occurring. EPA has also stopped funding existing grants. Expenses for those will be paid with state funds, when available, until the EPA releases funding. He added that IT systems for EPA and the Office of Surface Mining, Reclamation, and Enforcement (OSMRE) are either offline or experiencing problems, but that DEP staff has found temporary workarounds...

To help deal with Chester County sinkhole, Sunoco removes product from 44 miles of pipeline (Jan. 25) Sunoco is purging natural gas liquids from 44 miles of its Mariner East 1 pipeline to allow inspection of the line following the appearance of a sinkhole Sunday at a construction site in Chester County’s West Whiteland Township, the Public Utility Commission said. The removal of product was due to be complete by Thursday evening with the purging of the final 3.8 miles of the line to the Marcus Hook Industrial Complex in Delaware County, the PUC said late Thursday. On Wednesday, Sunoco finished “temporary stabilization work” around the sinkhole, including securing a section of the pipeline that was exposed when the sinkhole — estimated by the county emergency services to be about 10 feet deep — opened up, the PUC said. The whole of Mariner East 1 has been shut down since Jan. 21 and will not be allowed to restart until Sunoco gets approval from the PUC’s Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement, the statement said. “No product is flowing in this pipeline anywhere in Pennsylvania,” it said. In response to the sinkhole incident, Sunoco previously said it would purge the pipeline of product but did not specify how much of the line would be affected. The sinkhole is the latest to appear at Lisa Drive, a suburban development where Sunoco has been building the Mariner East 2 and 2X pipelines along the same right of way as the existing Mariner East 1. The existing pipeline was built in the 1930s and previously carried gasoline, but has been repurposed for natural gas liquids as part of the multi-billion-dollar Mariner East project...

Residents, environmental groups call for Clairton plant to go on ‘hot idle’ (Jan. 23) Some Clairton residents and environmental activists are calling on the Allegheny County Health Department to force US Steel to put the Clairton Coke Works on hot idle while it repairs the plant’s pollution controls. They made their case at a news conference Wednesday arranged by local environmental groups. The plant’s sulfur dioxide controls have been disabled since a Christmas Eve fire. Many residents didn’t know about the fire, and its impact on local air quality, right away because the county issued an air quality warning two weeks later, after pollution levels near Clairton spiked several times. The alert urged vulnerable populations — like children with asthma or the elderly — to limit their outdoor exposure. Several students in local schools have reported problems with their asthma since the fire. Summer Lee, state representative from nearby Braddock, said the county should force the plant to go on hot idle — where it stays running but doesn’t produce any coke — while US Steel retools its pollution control equipment. “By letting them continue on, it’s saying that the business of the Clairton Coke Works is more important than your health — and we’re here to say that that is not the case anymore,” Lee said, in heated comments at a community center in Clairton. Lee’s district includes another US Steel facility, the Edgar Thomson steel mill...

Residents question air-quality notification delay after Clairton Coke Works fire (Jan. 23) Dozens of Clairton residents came to hear officials from US Steel and Allegheny County discuss air pollution issues stemming from a Christmas Eve fire at the Clairton Coke Works. The fire damaged pollution controls, leading to spikes in pollution levels in the area. Many residents said they heard about the fire about two weeks after it happened, on Jan. 9, when the Allegheny County

Health Department issued an air quality warning – after levels of sulfur dioxide in the area exceeded federal health standards several times. One of those surprised by the news was the mayor of Clairton, Rich Lattanzi. He only heard about the fire when the county issued its warning. He said as the mayor of the town, he should have been kept informed. “The health department could have notified us, but I also want US Steel to also include us in that email or that chain to say, ‘Hey, you’re the city of Clairton, you’re the host community, this is what’s going on,’” he said. Art Thomas said he only heard about the fire on Jan. 9, watching the local news. His wife, Kathryn has sarcoidosis, a lung disease. For her to have to wait that long to find out, he said, “isn’t right.” The Clairton facility is the largest coke plant in North America. Coke is a key component of steelmaking, made by baking coal at high temperatures. The Dec. 24 fire damaged equipment that reduces emissions of sulfur dioxide, a lung irritant that can affect the breathing of people with asthma and other respiratory conditions. At the meeting, representatives from US Steel showed photos of where the fire started – at a compressor inside the plant’s gas processing center. Michael Rhoads, the plant manager at the Clairton Coke Works, said that the fire came after a pipe on the compressor ruptured. The rupture was so significant it “sheared the bolts that held the gas piping [of the equipment] together,” he told the crowd. “That gas piping being separated [became] the fuel source that resulted in the significant fire and the significant damage that we saw in the facility.”...

Pa. might set maximum limits on toxic chemicals in drinking water. Some ask: What’s there to decide? (Jan. 23) Joanne Stanton is watching Pennsylvania’s fledgling efforts to curb toxic PFAS chemicals in drinking water, and wondering why PFAS-contaminated water is still being found below several communities in Bucks and Montgomery counties, several miles from the water’s origin on a nearby military base. Stanton, a member of the Buxmont Coalition for Safer Water, says she’s tired of waiting for the federal government to say whether it will tighten health standards on the chemicals. She doesn’t understand why the military hasn’t yet cleaned up water and soil from the former Naval Air Station at Willow Grove on the border of the two counties; the Navy says it’s focusing on the most-contaminated soil. And she’s skeptical that Gov. Tom Wolf’s new PFAS Action Team will set standards on the chemicals any time soon.

Like other clean-water campaigners, Stanton is mystified that the team has no explicit plans to set maximum contaminant limits (MCLs) for any of the chemicals. Several states, including New Jersey, are using such standards. And she’s not happy that Wolf’s team consists of the heads of seven state departments but does not include representatives of affected communities like hers. Residents of Horsham and other towns near the base now have drinking water with low PFAS levels, but that’s thanks to local government efforts, Stanton said. Wolf’s spokesman, J.J. Abbott, said the team is participating in the Commonwealth’s efforts to evaluate “defensible” PFAS drinking water limits but declined to say whether the panel is pursuing MCLs to hit those goals. Department of Environmental Protection spokesman Neil Shader, speaking for the team’s Chairman, DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell, said the team might propose maximum contaminant levels as a way of protecting public water supplies, but if it did, that would have to be achieved through the normal regulatory process involving the Environmental Quality Board – which adopts DEP regulations — or through legislation. Shader said the environmental protection department is developing a sampling plan to identify impacted sites, and will work with any public water systems where the chemicals are found to make sure contamination doesn’t exceed the EPA’s health advisory level of 70 parts per trillion (ppt) for two of the most common PFAS chemicals, PFOA and PFOS...

Impact fee collected from gas drillers expected to reach new record (Jan. 23) An energy future with zero carbon emissions seems like a reasonable goal in light of the recent dire climate warnings. But is it even a feasible goal for Pennsylvania or anywhere else? And what would it take to get to zero carbon emissions? These are the questions being posed at an upcoming free public event hosted by StateImpact Pennsylvania, The Allegheny Front and 90.5 WESA. You can register here. The Allegheny Front’s Kara Holsopple talked with StateImpact reporters Amy Sisk and Reid Frazier, who will moderate the upcoming panel discussion. Their conversation has been lightly edited...

Pittsburgh suburb says no to drilling under park (Jan. 17)

WHYY PHILADELPHIA

‘Reviving the River’ series: Which streams in the Delaware Watershed are too dirty for swimming and fishing? Is it safe to swim in the stream at your local park? Will you catch a deadly disease if you eat fish caught in the Schuylkill? It’s

difficult to know just how clean your neighborhood waterbody really is without directly contacting a state official. This map provides an interactive display of streams in the Delaware watershed throughout Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The watershed includes all tributaries that flow into the main stem of the Delaware River, which begins at the headwaters in Hancock, NY and flows down into the Delaware Bay. It shows which waterways the states have decided do not meet standards for swimming and fish consumption. If a waterway is not on the map, it does not mean it's safe. That's because state regulators have to first decide if a particular waterway should ever meet those standards. For example, the main stem of the Delaware River in Philadelphia is not highlighted because the state has not targeted it for cleanup to the point where it would be swimmable. To find a stream near you, type the name into the search bar, and the map will jump to it. To look at parameters for swimming or fish consumption independent of one another, highlight which metric you want to look at in the "visible layers" menu. The data for this map was provided by Pennsylvania's and New Jersey's departments of environmental protection and only includes streams for which there was sufficient data. The state DEPs are required to issue a report to the EPA every two years outlining the health of their streams and identifying which ones aren't meeting standards. Each state sets its own standards, which are more stringent than the EPA's under the Clean Water Act. That can make it tricky to compare water quality across state lines. For example, if New Jersey's standards are harsher than Pennsylvania's, New Jersey's streams will look dirtier than Pennsylvania's because the state has a higher bar...

ALLENTOWN MORNING CALL

Coal Industry's Burned Out, Pockets Of Poverty Remain Where Sick People Get Sicker Alicia Kachmar was out of Tylenol and her toothache was getting worse by the minute. "I'd rather cut it out right now with a knife. I'd rather give natural childbirth than feel this pain in my mouth," she said as she trudged from her home in Lansford, where empty storefronts, abandoned homes and crumbling sidewalks are painful reminders of the Coal Region's decline, to a hospital about two miles away in Coaldale. To get there, she has to walk on the shoulder of Route 209 as cars whiz by at 45 mph — or more. She needed an oral surgeon to pull the tooth out, but the nearest one who accepts her Medicaid was almost an hour away. Kachmar didn't have a car or money for a cab. Actually, her problems went deeper: She didn't have a phone. With her brown hair pulled into a messy ponytail, she walked on the winding road, past the No. 9 Coal Mine museum, against a backdrop of barren mountains. Lansford is a densely packed borough of fewer than 4,000 people, close to two similarly sized towns but far from any big cities. From the sky, they look like patches on green and brown earth. The borough is in the heart of Pennsylvania's Coal Region, known for the richest deposits of anthracite in the country. In mines stretching from Susquehanna to Dauphin counties, nearly 5 million tons of the hard coal have been extracted. Until the latter part of the 20th century, Americans were reliant on the fuel to heat their homes and run their industries..

WTF HARRISBURG'S NPR STATION

Cost of shutdown in Pa. shows potential impact if it happens again Harrisburg -- The federal government will be back in business for a few weeks following a 35-day shutdown. But if lawmakers don't strike a funding deal during that time, the shutdown could resume. And we've learned that ramifications in Pennsylvania will be immediate - if limited. Wider-spread effects seem like they would really start hitting after about 90 days, concentrated among some of our most vulnerable residents and communities, according to what Pennsylvania agencies told us about effects from the recent shutdown. Federal government workers, who missed two paychecks, have been struggling, with nonprofits and private companies stepping up to help them with everything from utility bills to gym memberships. Like a number of other states, Pa. waived work registration and search requirements for furloughed federal employees eligible for unemployment compensation. But that didn't help much for those who are declared essential and have to work without pay, because they can't file for unemployment benefits. Food banks went mobile to meet some of those federal employees where they are, at prisons and other job sites. In Wayne County, state prison workers at Waymart collected money and essential supplies for their federal counterparts at the nearby U.S. Penitentiary Canaan, according to the Department of Corrections. **But Pa. has 14,200 federal employees in its workforce. Relative to population, that's not too many compared to other states.** If the federal government were to shut down again, many more Pennsylvanians would stand to be affected if money for basic survival needs like food and shelter is compromised. Millions, potentially, depending on the funding source; all of them, really, if you consider the state might cover costs in lieu of federal dollars (and did, in some cases, over the past month or so). PENNDOT, for example, expects to be paid back. But the department covered more than \$7 million in anticipated public transportation reimbursements that did not materialize

during the recent shutdown...

LANCASTER NEWSPAPERS

Toxic lead in drinking water: 10 Lancaster County schools find contamination; others must test this year Lisa Getz Bender is furious after learning recently that her kindergarten daughter could have been drinking lead-contaminated water at Akron Elementary School in 2017 and she wasn't told about it by school district officials. "That's not their decision to make. Even if it had been a minute level of lead, it can be detrimental to children. We should have at least been informed," she said. "Nobody was notified of any testing or any results of any pipe issues," says Bender's equally angry husband, Brian. "It was clearly swept under the carpet." A drinking fountain in a classroom and eight classroom sinks have been shut down at the 65-year-old school because, even after attempted repairs and re-tests, water still contained unsafe levels of the toxic metal. In the kindergarten classroom where Bender's daughter attended, the sink was tested three times. The first time lead levels were more than twice the action level in which the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency requires treatment in public water systems. The second time, after water pipes were flushed, it was lower but still at an unsafe level. But a third, follow-up test revealed the highest level yet. However, an attached drinking fountain, called a bubbler, did not have elevated levels of lead. Lisa Bender, who said her daughter has had unexplained behavioral problems that seem to match symptoms of lead poisoning, is taking her now first-grader back to the doctor and may have her tested to check for unhealthy levels of lead in her blood and bones. Lead in the body is especially dangerous for young children. It can cause behavior problems, affect IQ and result in hearing problems and delayed puberty. In adults it can affect the heart, kidneys and nerves...

Lead testing in Lancaster County schools: What's happening in your district? The following is a breakdown of how each of Lancaster County's 17 school districts fared in required testing for lead in the water for the 2018-19 school year.

SCRANTON TIMES TRIBUNE

Scranton Stormwater Pollution Reduction Options Study Still Outstanding

PA ENVIRONMENT DIGEST BLOG (By PA DEP)

PUC Investigation Of Mariner East 1 Pipeline Sinkhole In Chester County Shifts To Geological Testing On January 25, the Public Utility Commission announced detailed geological testing will begin Saturday, January 26 around the sinkhole that exposed the Mariner East 1 natural gas liquids pipeline on Lisa Drive in West Whiteland Township, Chester County. The entire length of the Mariner East 1 Pipeline remains shutdown. The geological testing will be closely monitored by pipeline safety engineers from the PUC and geophysical consultants. Work on-site to prepare for the surveys began Friday. The testing, which will be used to evaluate underground conditions, is expected to take several days to complete. The PUC's Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement pipeline safety engineers and geophysical consultants will be on-site monitoring the collection of geophysical data. The results of the testing will be shared with Bureau's engineers and Bureau's geophysical consultants for independent analysis and review...

Pittsburgh Water Authority To Replace 3,400 Lead Service Lines Using PennVEST Funding In 2019 On January 25, the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority said in its January newsletter it would replace 3,400 lead water service lines at no cost to customers during 2019 with the \$49 million in funding provided by the PA Infrastructure Investment Authority. During 2018, the Authority reported replacing 2,050 public lead service lines and 1,300 private lines. DEP required the Authority to replace at least 1,500 public lead services lines in 2018. The Authority said the 2019 replacement program would put it back soon track to replace all the lead service lines in its system by 2026. The latest round of drinking water sampling done in December found 15 percent were above the 15 parts per billion EPA lead action level. The Authority must meet a requirement that 10 percent of samples are no higher than 15 parts per billion...

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WASHINGTON POST

Commentary: The unsung heroes of the shutdown For a month, Americans got a crash course on the topic of "all the things the government does and who does them." "Government worker" was no longer a slur for many Americans who previously considered these workers overpaid, nonproductive and partisan. The government employees many Americans might have previously disdained are the ones who inspect food, direct planes, process tax refunds, fight criminals, etc. Without them, it turns out, life is more dangerous, chaotic and stressful for all of us. FBI Director Christopher A. Wray railed about the shutdown in a video to his employees: Wray exemplified the compassionate, high-minded leadership utterly lacking in the White House. His message stood in stark contrast to the almost comically insensitive comments from administration officials making light of real people's suffering. It's remarkable, when you think about it, that government workers showed up at all — spending money for gas or public transportation and in many cases for day care — when they were not getting paid. That should inspire admiration but also outrage. And it did. Many Americans began to ask how in the world we could force employees to work when the government has no obligation to pay them. (The technical answer: The 1947 Taft-Hartley Act bans federal workers from striking.) Democrats would be wise to insist on barring future shutdowns (by providing for an automatic continuing resolution when budget funding lapses) or, alternatively, by protecting government employees from being disciplined if they don't show up in a shutdown...

Backlogs, deadlines and a massive bureaucratic reboot await federal workers after shutdown's end An avalanche of emails, backlogged permits, lapsed contracts and stalled payments to low-income Americans will face the hundreds of thousands of federal employees who return to work Monday. For 35 days, they waited out the shutdown of nine Cabinet agencies and dozens of smaller ones. Now, they'll face a massive bureaucratic reboot that could take weeks or even months. The National Park Service will need to restore basic amenities at hundreds of parks and monuments, removing accumulated trash and plowing multiple feet of snow. The Bureau of Indian Affairs must quickly issue grants to head off food shortages and a health-care crisis for Native American tribal members whose funding was cut off. Inspectors returning from furlough to the National Transportation Safety Board will have to decide which of the almost 100 rail, plane and highway crashes to investigate first. And the Internal Revenue Service will race to train employees to implement changes to the tax code and hire thousands of temporary workers for tax season. "I'm so ready to go back to work," said Laura Barmby, an international trade specialist with the Commerce Department. She was so anxious to dig into her backlog she planned to log in to her computer from home on Sunday. Barmby's immediate concern is a blown deadline for a prestigious presidential awards program for exporters, "a big deal in my little world," she said. After that, she intends to contact a group of companies advising the U.S. government on an upcoming trade pact with the United Kingdom to reschedule multiple missed meetings. The first order of business for her and more than 350,000 others who spent the shutdown at home will be simple office tasks, like new passwords for computers. Timecards will need filling out, so payroll staffs know who was furloughed, worked without pay, called in sick, earned overtime or a combination...

2018 was the fourth warmest year on record -- and more evidence of a 'new normal,' scientist group reports The year 2018 is likely to have been the fourth warmest year on record, a scientific group pronounced Thursday -- and joins three other extra-hot years since 2015 that suggest a leap upward in warmth that the Earth may never return from in our lifetimes. The warmest year on record for the Earth's land and oceans was 2016 -- by a long shot, thanks to a very strong El Nino event. That's followed by 2017, 2015, and now 2018, said Zeke Hausfather, a research scientist with Berkeley Earth, which released the findings. "2018 is consistent with the long term warming trend," Hausfather said. "It's significantly warmer than any of the years before 2015. There's still this big bump up after 2014, and 2015, 2016, 2017, and 2018 are all in a class of their own."...

The Energy 202 Blog: Bill Gates is selling Washington on the promise of nuclear power Bill Gates is no stranger to Washington. His foundation has a big office here. And last March he met with President Trump and talked about preventing disease and spreading vaccines. Recently Gates visited some key members of Congress. This time he was talking about what he sees as a key part of the answer for combating climate change: a return to nuclear power. And the Microsoft co-founder was trying to persuade Congress to spend billions of dollars over the next decade for pilot projects that would test two or three new designs for nuclear power reactors. As I wrote in Sunday's paper, Gates has been thinking about nuclear power for a while. He founded TerraPower in 2006 and during his recent visits to Capitol Hill, he told lawmakers that he personally would invest \$1 billion and raise \$1 billion more in private capital to go along with

federal funds for a pilot of his company's never-before-used technology, according to congressional staffers...

The Energy 202 Blog: Democrats blast Trump administration for oil and gas activities during shutdown In the West, President Trump's administration is "working nearly unimpeded" on oil and gas leasing. In Alaska, it has "barely slowed" efforts to open Arctic wilderness to fossil fuel development. And off the nation's coasts, it is "moving full speed ahead" to craft a plan to auction off ocean drilling rights. House Democrats levied accusation after accusation against the Trump administration yesterday on Capitol Hill for seeming to give preferential treatment to the oil and gas industry during the partial government shutdown. More than a dozen Cabinet-level departments in the federal government have ceased all but the most essential activities after running out of congressionally appropriated funds late last year. They include the Interior Department, which oversees oil and gas leasing on thousands of acres of public lands...

Power Up: Round Two: Can Trump and Democrats make a deal on border funding?

DELAWARE

DELAWARE CAPE GAZETTE

Shutdown stalling striped bass management decisions (Jan. 25) For months now I've heard there are plenty of striped bass out in the ocean - about seven miles out. "They're out there and they'll bite, but that's in federal waters where it's illegal to take or target striped bass. And the feds are enforcing with drones. No sense in risking it." I heard that on a number of occasions. At the same time, the consensus has been that very few keeper-sized stripers were around for the late fall and early winter season this year in coastal waters inside the three-mile line. Way off from previous years in the past 20 when we counted on a decent late striper season in those waters. In the 1990s, there was a moratorium on all striper harvest due to concerns that the overall population of this popular East Coast fishery had fallen to unsustainable levels. With that moratorium, striper numbers gradually started to rebound. Limited harvest levels eventually returned with the lifting of the moratorium in coastal waters, and there was a sense that a solid recovery was underway...

DELAWARE PUBLIC MEDIA (NPR)

2019 Science and Environmental Summit focuses on collaboration (Jan. 26) The latest Delaware Estuary Science and Environmental Summit is getting underway. The 2019 edition of the four-day summit is in Cape May, New Jersey. "The Delaware Estuary Science and Environmental Summit began in 2005. And it is a biennial conference that we coordinate to bring people from across the basin and even beyond, together, to facilitate dialogue to seek solutions to challenges in the Delaware River and Bay," said the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary's director of donor engagement Kathy Klein. Klein says the Summit brings together scientists, environmental educators, managers and the general public to share things what they're working on. "The theme for this year's Summit is "Saving Our System Through Collaboration," said Klein. "And I think that the Environmental Summit really provides an opportunity for fostering collaboration that has been ongoing since the beginning of the first Summit in 2005. Klein says new projects and new partnerships have been developed at the Summit over the years. Sea level rise, climate change, horseshoe crabs and the red-knot connection in the Delaware Bay are among the topics scheduled to be discussed. After the Summit is over, Klein says you can log on to Delaware Estuary to view clips from presentations made during the Summit. Klein says the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary has arranged nearly 100 presentations for the event and 341 people are registered to attend. Klein says one other topic on the agenda is the large 2004 oil spill on the Delaware River. That spill saw 30,000 gallons of crude oil leak from a ship and leave a 24-mile-long slick. She says scientists will discuss what was learned from that spill and if the region is better prepared now - 20 years later - for another major spill - should it happen.

MIDDLETOWN TRANSCRIPT

Bayer Crop Science sponsoring Delaware Farm Bureau Foundation outreach Bayer Crop Science recently made a \$3,000

donation to Delaware Farm Bureau to be used for its educational outreach programs. Through the program, farmers will tell stories of how local Delaware farm families are utilizing science and technology to provide safe, affordable and nutritious foods to consumers. Bayer's Crop Science division is the third largest innovative agricultural input company in the world and has businesses in high-value seeds, crop protection and non-agricultural pest control. The nonprofit Delaware Farm Bureau Foundation, incorporated in 2013, was created to build awareness, understanding and positive public perception about Delaware's farm operations, promote fresh local food and sponsor the Ag Education Mobile Classroom.

WEST VIRGINIA

CHARLESTON GAZETTE-MAIL

Commentary: Fight in Minden isn't over (By Brandon Richardson) (Jan. 25) Is the fight in Minden over? The short answer is no. The fight for health and justice in Minden will not be ending anytime soon, if ever. There is lots more work to be done. The PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) contamination is still present, people are living in harm's way, and PCBs take upwards of 495 years to decompose naturally. The Environmental Protection Agency has dumped an enormous amount of resources to answer the questions of whether the Shaffer Equipment Company site is still contaminated, has the contamination moved off the site, and are residential properties contaminated? The answers are yes, yes, and yes. This was absolutely no surprise. In fact, of the many questions residents have, these were not very important. Minden residents knew the Shaffer site was still contaminated because the cleanup was never complete. Minden residents knew that the PCBs were in places other than the site because many saw PCBs dumped in several areas throughout Minden. Some even dumped them in these various locations as a part of their job. Minden residents did not witness any cleanup efforts whatsoever at these additional sites. Minden residents knew that these chemicals have moved on to residential property because they watched erosion of massive proportions carve through the dump sites during the flood of 2001. Millions of taxpayer dollars have been spent on these investigations mainly to pull the EPA out of its own denial. When are Minden residents going to be relocated? How are we going to receive specialized PCB-related healthcare throughout our lives? When is the EPA going to admit its role in our health problems? When are our health agencies going to address the systemic underreporting of cancer in Minden? These are the most important questions on the minds of Minden residents. These are the questions that have been all but avoided in agency meetings with the people of Minden. Some of these questions, when answered, will physically have impacts on human lives... The Minden Community Action Team believes in people power. We know that Minden residents, surrounding communities, Fayette County residents, the people of this state and people across the country can bring justice for Minden. As a group, the Minden Community Action Team believe that those who are closest to and most affected by the PCBs know what is at the core of this issue. This is why we build leadership skills among those whose yards are contaminated and share a fence-line with the pollution. We love our allies and we know they are key to building the people power needed to pressure people in power. A true ally does not come to the table with their own mission and criticism for the strategy, tactics, and goals of our community leaders. Rather, they lift up, support, and enhance the work that is being led by Minden frontline community members by asking where their skills and talents can be used. If anyone reading this is up for the challenge, please reach out to the Minden Community Action Team. We need your help.

WEST VIRGINIA PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Inside Appalachia: EPA May List Minden, Government Shutdown Causes Delays Two years ago, residents of Minden, West Virginia, asked the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to do more testing and consider the town's soil and water to be a health and environmental risk in need of another cleanup. Last September, residents received the news that, after analyzing new data, the agency proposed listing Minden on the Superfund National Priorities List (NPL). A final determination was supposed to happen this spring, but the partial government shutdown has pushed that back. How is the delay affecting residents? The NPL is a list of the most toxic contaminated sites in the country. Qualifying for the NPL means the federal government will pay for

another clean up. This week on Inside Appalachia, we are taking another look at a story that aired in the summer of 2018 about the history of how an entire town was contaminated with the harmful chemical polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and the government cleanup efforts to mitigate the problem. Residents were faced with the possibility that the contaminants caused cancer and made it impossible to sell their homes and leave. In the 1980s, the EPA found that Shaffer Equipment was responsible for contaminating the town's soil with PCBs. The company rebuilt electrical substations for the local coal mining industry...

WEST VIRGINIA METRO NEWS

Talk of developing Appalachian storage hub for natural gas continues CHARLESTON, W.Va. — A storage hub for natural gas remains a hot topic. The Appalachian storage hub that has been in development over recent years was a big topic of discussion at the 2019 Independent Oil and Gas Association of West Virginia winter meeting in Charleston over the past week. Independent Oil and Gas Association of West Virginia (IOGAWV) president Brett Loflin said the much-anticipated hub, which would store natural gas liquids underground in a four-state region that includes West Virginia, could be coming sooner rather than later. "It is a reality," he said. "It's going to happen and if it happens it's an impact of 100,000 jobs in our area. Not just West Virginia but also Ohio, Pennsylvania, and possibly Kentucky. "The hubs will allow us to use the natural gas that we produce in our own state. We will be able to use it in our state. There is nothing wrong with exporting natural gas because we still have to pay employees to drill the wells and find the resources that contain the gas." Loflin, who is also the vice president of regulatory affairs for Northeast Natural Energy, said there will be more than one site that would store the natural gases such as ethane, propane, and butane. He said there has been \$1.9 billion of guaranteed loans that will go to the research in determining the best spots for storage of the liquids...

Q&A: Pipelines and their Impact on People and Jobs (Jan. 24) On this West Virginia Morning, West Virginia Public Broadcasting's energy and environment reporter, Brittany Patterson, recently visited Summers County. She spoke with a family affected by natural gas pipelines built nearby. Pipeline supporters point to millions of dollars in economic benefits and thousands of jobs. But some residents living in the path of these projects have seen their way of life radically altered...

MARYLAND

CHESAPEAKE BAY JOURNAL

Cleaner coal ash disposal gets bipartisan support in Virginia (Jan. 28) Virginia's toxic legacy of storing coal ash in unlined pits near Chesapeake Bay rivers could be put to rest by a bill that now has bipartisan support. Under legislation backed Thursday by a bipartisan group of legislators, Gov. Ralph Northam and Dominion Energy, the utility would have to fully excavate at least four coal ash impoundments around Virginia where the ash is currently stored. The ash would need to be recycled into concrete-making materials or safely landfilled within 15 years, according to the legislation. Dominion maintains more than 11 coal ash ponds and six coal ash landfills totaling about 27 million cubic yards of ash. The plan would require the company to recycle a minimum of nearly 7 million cubic yards by the 15-year mark and to seal the rest in approved landfills. Coal ash, the byproduct of burning coal for power, can contain toxic chemicals and heavy metals such as arsenic, lead and mercury, which have in some cases leached into the surrounding groundwater. Environmental groups and residents vocally opposed Dominion's previous plans to permanently store the ash by covering it in leak-prone, unlined pits, a move they said would harm local waterways and drinking water. "We have fought for four years for legislation like this," Potomac Riverkeeper Dean Naujoks said in a statement. "The dangers of coal ash leaking into groundwater, drinking wells, our rivers and streams and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay have long been documented." Naujoks credited the shift in the General Assembly to Northam, who proposed legislation in favor of ash recycling early this month, and Sen. Scott Surovell (D-Fairfax), who presented one of several senate bills that would require coal ash be excavated from pits near waterways. Sen. Amanda Chase (R-Chesterfield) also proposed bills that would prohibit coal ash impoundments in the Chesapeake Bay watershed like the one in her jurisdiction...

Norfolk counting on flood-resiliency project to offset wetter future A landmark U.S. Army Corps of Engineers report in 2017 called for \$1.8 billion in projects to protect Virginia's second-largest city from sea level rise and stronger coastal storms. That's because Norfolk is in the crosshairs of sea level rise. It's a low-lying city at the confluence of the James River and Chesapeake Bay, just a few miles from the Atlantic Ocean. With a large population, key military installations and water problems already occurring, Norfolk has begun grappling with how it will prepare for a wetter future. Some clues may lie in two of its most flood-prone neighborhoods, where construction is scheduled to begin in April on a flood-resiliency project whose cost and scope rival any undertaken so far in the United States. Bolstered by an injection of \$112 million in federal dollars, local officials plan to install more than 7,000 feet of earthen berms, about 1,000 feet of floodwalls, several acres of tidal marsh, a tide gate and two pump stations. The project also includes raising nearly a half-mile of roads by up to 6 feet above existing ground level. "The idea is to hold the water while you can, clean it and release it slowly into the system when you can," said Christine Morris, Norfolk's chief resilience officer...

Atlantic Coast Pipeline on shakier ground as legal challenges add up (Jan. 25) A string of recent court decisions has left the future uncertain for a sprawling natural gas pipeline project cutting its way across some Chesapeake Bay states. Judges have reversed three federal permits that would have allowed the Atlantic Coast Pipeline to cross national parks and trails or to impact endangered species, halting construction while Dominion Energy, the project's backer, regroups to appeal. Despite strong local opposition along the project's 600-mile path — which winds its way from West Virginia through Virginia to North Carolina — the Atlantic Coast Pipeline had been gathering steam over the last three years while garnering the federal and state permits necessary to begin construction in Virginia. Dominion officials contend that the pipeline is essential to meet growing energy demands along the East Coast and to replace coal-fueled power generation with natural gas. The project is one of several pipelines planned or under construction to carry natural gas across portions of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The gas is extracted from underground shale formations using a controversial technique called hydraulic fracturing, or "fracking," and pipeline construction often entails disrupting wetlands, crossing streams, removing trees and exposing bare soil, sometimes on steep slopes. Environmental groups say the \$7 billion Atlantic Coast Pipeline, the largest project of its kind in the region, poses an unnecessary threat to natural resources and cost to ratepayers. They also argue that the hurried permit process that preceded it cannot now stand up in court...

Chesapeake falls to a D-plus in Bay Foundation's annual report card (Jan. 7) The Chesapeake Bay Foundation downgraded the health of the nation's largest estuary Monday from a C-minus to a D-plus, blaming the dip in its latest report card on increased pollution from extraordinary amounts of rainfall in 2018. "The Bay suffered a massive assault in 2018," said CBF President Will Baker. Chronically wet weather throughout the six-state watershed washed more water-fouling nutrients into the Bay, reversing what had been several years of sustained gains in reducing pollution. Only two years ago, the Annapolis-based environmental group had bumped the Bay's health grade up to C-minus, declaring the estuary to be in the best shape since it began issuing periodic report cards in 1998. But nitrogen and phosphorus pollution rose significantly in 2018 because of record rainfall, the group said. Water clarity — which had improved in places in recent years — declined from the clouds of sediment that washed into the Chesapeake, as well as from algae blooms fed by the influx of nutrients. The foundation's report card assessed the Bay's condition by evaluating 13 indicators of pollution, habitat and fisheries. Besides noting worsening pollution in 2018, the group's assessment also noted a further decline in the diminished stock of American shad in the Chesapeake, marked by record-low spawning runs of the migratory fish in the Susquehanna and Pamunkey rivers. While pollution worsened in 2018, the group found that other indicators of the Chesapeake's ecological health held steady, or even improved. It credited years of cleanup and restoration efforts for that stability. Underwater grasses, which had rebounded to cover more than 100,000 acres of Bay bottom in 2017, suffered some dieback in places last year, said CBF senior scientist Beth McGee, but appeared overall to have withstood the flood of nutrients and sediment. Likewise, the 64,000-mile watershed saw a minor gain in protected resource lands in 2018, while the stock of forested stream buffers and wetlands remained stable. "The good news," Baker said, "is there are signs the Bay is developing a resilience that may help it overcome long-term damage caused by records storms and rainfall which dumped polluted runoff into our waters."...

FREDERICK NEWS-POST

The new clean water rule is out, but nothing's changed (Jan. 2) Within the past few weeks, agriculture has seen some major wins in Washington. The 2018 Farm Bill was passed in the House and Senate, and has now been signed by

President Trump. Prior to that, a trade agreement had been arranged between the U.S., Canada, and Mexico – just in time for harvest when farmers are looking for a market to sell their product. One of the major wins for America’s farmers and ranchers has proved to be quite controversial, particularly in the Chesapeake Bay region. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently proposed a new Clean Water rule, which would rescind the 2015 “waters of the U.S.” (WOTUS) rule under the Clean Water Act. The 2015 rule never went into effect nationwide because of several court rulings that deemed it unconstitutional. A lack of clarity in the rule made it difficult for farmers and ranchers to know what they could or could not do on their land. Under the 2015 rule, flooded farmland in Maryland from the torrential rain we received this year could have been subject to federal oversight. A team of lawyers, environmental engineers, and consultants would have been needed to ensure we were farming in accordance with the law. While this new rule relieves the burden of wondering if a sometimes-there, sometimes-gone swale, ditch, or pond on a farm is federally regulated, our commitment to conservation and improving the health of the Chesapeake Bay has not wavered... Farmers have never stood idle on the sidelines and waited for change. We know that the work is not done yet. We are committed to preserving and protecting the Bay, which is why we remain active and engaged in discussions related to Bay cleanup. Just this summer, the Maryland Farm Bureau Board of Directors met with Cosmo Servidio, the EPA’s Region 3 Administrator, to discuss the next phase of the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) and the impact it would have on farmers in the state. Servidio praised the Board members in the room saying farmers “truly are the first environmentalists.” An open-door policy was established between the agriculture sector and the EPA.

VIRGINIA

VIRGINIA MERCURY

After years of legislative wrangling, ‘peace in the valley’ on coal ash (Jan. 25) Republicans and Democrats, and perhaps most importantly, Dominion Energy, appear to have struck an accord that will ensure that some 30 million tons of coal ash at four sites around the state won’t be left to leak heavy metals and other contaminants into waterways. The deal was rolled out by Democratic Gov. Ralph Northam, Speaker of the House Kirk Cox, R-Colonial Heights, and other lawmakers at a news conference Thursday morning, but the people actually tasked with ensuring that the deal’s various provisions get hammered into a piece of legislation were at a Senate subcommittee meeting later in the day merging substitute bills as lobbyists for environmental and business interests stood sentry. “There is peace in the valley on a bill,” said Sen. Ben Chafin, R-Russell, chairman of a special subcommittee created by Sen. Frank Wagner, R-Virginia Beach, chairman of the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee, to evaluate a series of bills dealing with how the ash ponds should be closed and how the costs should be recovered by Dominion. There’s a lot of lip service about bipartisanship in the General Assembly. But for an example of what it really looks like, consider that Sens. Amanda Chase, R-Chesterfield, and Scott Surovell, D-Fairfax, have been fighting to slow or alter Dominion’s prior plans to cap the leaking coal ash ponds in place for the past three legislative sessions. Though there appears to be a critical mass of support behind getting the ash out of unlined pits next to waterways now, it was a fairly lonely proposition for both lawmakers with their respective caucuses not that long ago. For example, on Thursday, Sen. Rosalyn Dance, D-Petersburg, a longtime Dominion ally whose district includes the Chesterfield Power Station and who was a skeptic about “clean closure” of the ash ponds in the recent past, pushed Thursday to become a chief co-sponsor of the bill that would require exactly that...

Former State Water Control Board member talks with EPA criminal investigators (Jan. 23) Former State Water Control Board Member Roberta Kellam says she has provided a statement to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency criminal investigators. The news, first reported by The Roanoke Times and confirmed by the Mercury, comes as a pair of Roanoke attorneys are seeking a criminal investigation into alleged violations of civil and criminal laws by the Mountain Valley Pipeline, a natural gas pipeline between West Virginia and Pittsylvania County currently under construction. “I have no additional comments other than to say that I did provide a statement to the U.S. EPA Criminal Investigation Division,” Kellam, who has written op-eds for the Mercury that have been critical of the state’s oversight of a pair of natural gas pipeline projects, said in a statement to the Mercury. “We concluded there was enough evidence of violations of criminal law, particularly the Clean Water Act, that we could make a good-faith submission to the EPA,” Charlie Williams, an attorney who specializes in environmental law at the firm of Gentry Locke, told The Roanoke Times. The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to hear a constitutional challenge over use of eminent domain brought by

...te, Northam's order reconstitutes environmental justice advisory council (Jan. 23) After a vote on what had become Virginia's most high-profile environmental justice issue — the contentious natural gas compressor station proposed for Buckingham County by Dominion Energy as part of its Atlantic Coast Pipeline — Gov. Ralph Northam is reconstituting an advisory council that urged him last year to halt the project. The former members of the Governor's Advisory Council on Environmental Justice were invited to apply to serve on the new body, called the Virginia Council on Environmental Justice, in an email from Secretary of Natural Resources Matt Strickler. A spokesman for the Department of Environmental Quality says the old council's legal authority had "expired," which is consistent with what council members had heard from the Virginia Attorney General's Office. "I'd like to express my sincere gratitude to you and all members of the Governor's Advisory Council on Environmental Justice for your service over the past year. I am pleased to report that the governor has acted on a key recommendation from your report to continue his commitment to environmental justice through the issuance of Executive Order 29 — establishing a new Virginia Council on Environmental Justice," Strickler wrote. The new council will "build on your work by recommending a long-term framework to guide environmental justice decision-making and ensure environmental justice concerns are integrated across state programs, policies, permits and procedures," Strickler said...

Six senators vote against Northam's pick to lead environmental agency (Jan. 22) Gov. Ralph Northam disappointed some members of his transition team and left environmental groups seething last year when he reappointed David Paylor to his longtime job as director of the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. Business interests, including the state's big utilities, chief among them Dominion Energy, like Paylor's light touch with the regulatory powers his office wields. Conservationists loath his agency's deference to polluters, from the utilities to poultry farms and industrial emitters. On Monday, that debate spilled onto the Senate floor...

Another election-year GOP ploy on fossil fuel bill? (Jan. 24) A strange thing happened at the House Commerce and Labor Committee Tuesday. A sweeping and ambitious (probably overly so) bill by Del. Sam Rasoul, D-Roanoke, that would dramatically overhaul Virginia's energy landscape made it out of the GOP-controlled committee over the fervent opposition of utilities and energy interests that generally hold lots of sway there...

ROANOKE TIMES

Roanoke attorneys seek criminal investigation of Mountain Valley Pipeline (Jan. 22) Crews building the Mountain Valley Pipeline may have violated civil and criminal laws by continuing construction in streams and wetlands after a permit was suspended, two Roanoke attorneys say in asking for a federal investigation. Charlie Williams and Tom Bondurant told The Roanoke Times this week that they have shared with the Environmental Protection Agency a "substantial body of evidence" gathered by Preserve Bent Mountain, an organization they represent. After reviewing photographs and other documentation from the group, which spent weeks monitoring pipeline construction, Williams and Bondurant asked the EPA in a Nov. 26 letter to conduct a formal investigation. "We concluded there was enough evidence of violations of criminal law, particularly the Clean Water Act, that we could make a good-faith submission to the EPA," said Williams, who specializes in environmental law at the firm of Gentry Locke. Bondurant, a Gentry Locke attorney and former federal prosecutor, said that it could be a criminal offense for Mountain Valley to continue work in water bodies after its stream-crossing permit was suspended last October by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. It was unclear if an investigation has begun. Officials with the EPA did not return calls or respond to emailed questions Monday and Tuesday. A Mountain Valley spokeswoman declined to comment. But there appears to be some activity in the agency's Washington, D.C., headquarters related to the pipeline. Roberta Kellam, a former State Water Control Board member who voted against a water quality certification for the pipeline and has been critical of its environmental impact, said this week she has provided a statement to the EPA's criminal investigations division. She declined to comment further...

FREDERICKSBURG FREE LANCE STAR

Three grants expected to generate business for partners, improve the reegion's environment (Jan. 6) Recent grants ranging from \$25,000 to over \$1 million are expected to generate new business activity and opportunities for several historic and environmental groups in the region. Localities along the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries stand to benefit

from a \$1.08 million grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to the Chesapeake Conservancy. The money is expected to allow the organization to update and improve land-use data critical to the restoration of the Bay. "This project will give states, counties and local jurisdictions critical information on how the landscape is changing over time and how these changes impact progress towards achieving restoration of local waters and the Chesapeake Bay," said EPA Regional Administrator Cosmo Servidio. "It will also provide more accurate information about how water moves through the landscape which will help the partners plan restoration efforts." The Annapolis-based Chesapeake Conservancy, working with project partners and the Chesapeake Bay Partnership, will use the grant to help provide state and local jurisdictions updated, high-resolution and high-quality data. That data is expected to include changes to landscapes and the locations of headwaters, streams and other water features to assist in the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and local waters...